Football Fans: Investigating the Relationship between Fan Motivation and Aggressive Behaviours

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Abstract

Background: Today, economic and social profitability in addition to other factors that benefit audiences and fans of the sports industry, especially football, is unthinkable. However, violence and aggression in the sport may make sports culture difficult and can reduce the profitability of fans for the sports industry. The purpose of this study was to investigate the motivations of the Iranian Premier League football teams' fans and the relevance of different aspects of violence to the fan motivations.

Methods: The research method is descriptive-correlational. Data were collected in the field. The study population consisted of 389 fandoms of Iranian Premier League clubs. The research instrument was the standard questionnaire of fan motivation (Funk et al., 2012) ($\alpha = 0.87$) and aggression (Rocca & Vogl-Bauer, 1999) ($\alpha = 0.81$). Descriptive and inferential statistics including a one-sample t-test, Pearson correlation, and structural equation modelling test were used to analyze the data. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS and Amos 24 software.

Findings: The results showed that the level of fandom and aggression in the sample was high. A positive and significant relationship between these variables was observed. These results can act as a guide for fandom and team leaders as well as tournament managers because as a result of the greater recognition of this great community, there will be ways to control and make the most of their potential.

Conclusion: A useful and effective solution is to bring cultural-sports clubs closer to their fans so that they can have a positive impact on their fans' behaviour by using cultural models and programs and using social psychologists.

Keyword: Football Fans, Fan Motivation, Aggressive Behaviours.

Introduction

Sport has become an important industry around the world. Governments, nations, and organizations around the world use sport as a means of resolving problems. The sports industry in developed countries accounts for a significant portion of national income; Sport in Iran is also very diverse and has the potential to bring about high economic, cultural and social growth as well as developments in other fields for the country (Aghaie et al., 2017). On the one hand, consumers and customers are stakeholders for any business (Freeman, 1894) and on the other hand are strategic assets (Farahani et al., 2014). In the sports industry, one can view the team as a "brand" and the fans of the sports teams as "customers" (Bridgewater, 2010). In today's competitive world, business executives need to understand buyers' motivations as well as respect their motivations, values, lifestyles, insights, attitudes, and needs to increase their market size and attract more customers. In this regard, the social sciences have helped a great deal in understanding customers (Wang et al., 2019). Accordingly, in the field of human behaviour, factors have been identified that lead people to a particular goal and make them actualize their dreams. Psychologists call these factors motivation. Motivation involves the state or inner pressure and purposes the behaviour is directed at. In fact, for the operational definition of the incentive in the form of purchasing it can be stated that the incentive to buy is a stimulus in the buyers that compels them to buy (Solomon, 2004). Purchasing motivation as a boundary state is between the effects of positive and negative emotions associated with the shopping experience and the level of customer satisfaction (Wenzel & Benkenstein, 2018). Motivation and decision to buy

refers to consumers' willingness to use a particular service and resistance to the use of another service. Thus, customer behaviour must be predicted (Darabi et al., 2018; Darabi et al., 2020).

Research has shown that buyers are divided into four categories: economic buyer, moral buyer, personal buyer, and the indifferent buyer (Stone, 1954). Tauber also categorizes buying incentives into two types of social incentives and personal motivation. Social incentives include being in the community, engaging with peers, social status, and enjoyment while personal motivations consist of role-playing, leisure and entertainment, personal satisfaction, emotional motivation and physical activities (Tauber, 1972). In this regard, research has identified the motivation of consumers to engage in sports. To date, more than 100 motivational factors have been studied by researchers about why people participate in sports. Past studies of motivation among young athletes have shown that entertainment, skill development, challenge, and fitness are the most important motivational factors (Burton, 2003; Gould et al., 1985). In addition, according to Wankel (1993), sports participants identified entertainment/pleasure as the most important motivation. McDonald (2002) identified 13 motivational structures (including fitness, risk-taking, stress reduction, aggression, dependency, social facilitation, self-esteem, competition, achievement, mastery skills, aesthetics, value development, and self-sufficiency). They found that participants in different sports differed in most of the motivational structures. Besides, researchers found motivational differences among participants in individual and team sports (McDonald et al., 2002; May & Langer, 2000).

Group sports certainly enjoy a bigger crowd as audience than other sports, and football, as one of the most popular sports in the world, has great potential for spectators to engage in agitation and aggression. Kalati, Darabi & Shojaei (2020), have argued that since motivational behaviours have emerged, researchers have always sought to discover the causes of violent behaviour in sport.

In other aspects of social life, deviant behaviour can be seen. So in sport, this phenomenon can be witnessed as well. One of the most common problems in sports is the misbehaviour of fans, and many deviant behaviours inside and outside the stadium and between individuals and groups of spectators are gradually increasing. There are many types of misbehaviour in sport, and among deviant behaviours, fan aggression has been documented as an essential element in many sporting events (Klomenis, 2005). Sports may put fans in situations where conditions, laws, and norms are easily violated and lead to aggression and violence (Honari et al, 2011). Conceptually, aggression is any directed behaviour toward individuals that is associated with harm (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Also, aggression causes general harm and is not directly related to the goals of athletic competition (Terry & Jackson, 1985).

In the study by Folkesson et al (2002), internal factors such as the behaviour of players and coaches as well as the performance of referees are considered to be very important. Spaaij (2014) also designed a model where viewers' collective violence arises from the dynamic interaction between individual, interpersonal, situational, and social factors; and the interplay between individual and environmental factors occurs at different levels. Also, the social environment and so-cial structure influence individual or group behaviour and, at the same time, individual or group behaviour affect their environment. Toder-Alon et al's (2018) results confirm the relationship between age, team identity, and aggression of fans. They believe that older people have higher levels of loyalty and lower levels of aggression.

According to the literature, the motivations of a team for support and its relationship to violent behaviours while watching matches are of little interest to researchers. As noted above, the economic and social benefits and benefits that come from the spectators and supporters of the sports industry, especially football, are unimaginable. However, violence and aggression in the sport may lead to the destruction of sports culture and reduce the profitability of the sports industry. Understanding the purpose of this research will be a guide for team fandom leaders as well as tournament managers as they will gain a better understanding of this large community, ways to control and make the most of their potential. In this study, we try to analyze the motivations of the fans of Iranian Premier League football teams and investigate the motives of Iranian football fans and the different aspects of violence related to the fans' motivations.

Materials and Methods

The research method is applied and descriptive-correlational in terms of purpose and its data is collected in the field. The study population consists of fans of Iranian Premier League clubs. Due to the unknown number of people in the community and using the Cochran formula, 400 questionnaires were randomly distributed among the fans. Finally, by excluding incomplete and confusing questionnaires, the remaining 389 questionnaires were used to analyze the data. Data collection tools included two standard ques-

tionnaires. The first one, a standard questionnaire of fan motivation (Funk et al., 2012) with 6 components of socialization (items 1 to 3), performance (items 4 to 6), emotion (items 7 to 9), reputation and validity (items 10 to 12), diversity (items 13 to 15) and team knowledge (items 16 to 18) with a total of 18 items was used. The second questionnaire was the standard aggression questionnaire (Rocca & Vogl-Bauer, 1999) with two verbal components (items 1 and 2) and physical items (items 3 to 11) totalling 11 items. It should be noted that the validity of the questionnaires was confirmed by the opinion of sport management experts and their reliability was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha test with the coefficient alpha for the fan motivation questionnaire calculated as 0.87 and for the aggression questionnaire as 0.81. Also, both descriptive statistics such as central tendency and dispersion indices and inferential statistics were used to analyze the research data. Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was employed to check whether data was normal and One-sample t-test to check the status of variables in the sample under study. Pearson correlation test and Structural Equation Modelling test were used. All the statistical analyses were done by SPSS and Amos version 24 software.

Results

In this section, the findings of the research questionnaire are reported. Results from the first part of the questionnaire showed that 29% of participants were under 20 years of age, 51% of them were 21-30 years old, 10% of them were 31-40 years old and 10% were over 41 years old. From the educational point of view, 53% of participants had a bachelor's degree, 27% had a master's degree, 13% had a bachelor's degree, and 7% had a master's or doctorate degree. In terms of team fandom history, 38% of participants

were under 5 years old, 33% were between 6 and 10 years old, 15% were between 11 and 15 years old, and 14% were over 15 years old. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of the data distribution that results showed that the distribution of data related to variables and components of the research was normal and be used for parametric tests.

Table 1 One-sample t-test to determine the role of scores on fan motivation and aggression questionnaires

Variable	Mean	T	p.value
Fandom motivation	4.14	97.89	0.001
Aggression	4.40	56.54	0.001

The results showed that the mean score of fan motivations and all its components indicate a favourable relative status, with a mean score higher than 3. Also, considering the levels of significance which are all under 0.05, it can be said that the null hypothesis is rejected and there is a significant difference between the mean of the fan motivational and all its components with the hypothetical mean.

Also, the mean score of aggression and all its components indicate a relatively good condition, with a mean score greater than 3. Also with regard to the levels of significance, which are under 0.05, it can be said that the null hypothesis is rejected and there is a significant difference between the mean of aggression components and the assumed mean, but there was no significant difference between the mean aggression and hypothetical mean.

Table 2 Test of correlation between fan motivation and its components with aggression

		Motivation	Aggression
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	0.294**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	200	200

The results showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between the two variables of fan motivation and aggression.

Route coefficients and significant values in standard and non-standard states are presented in the following table.
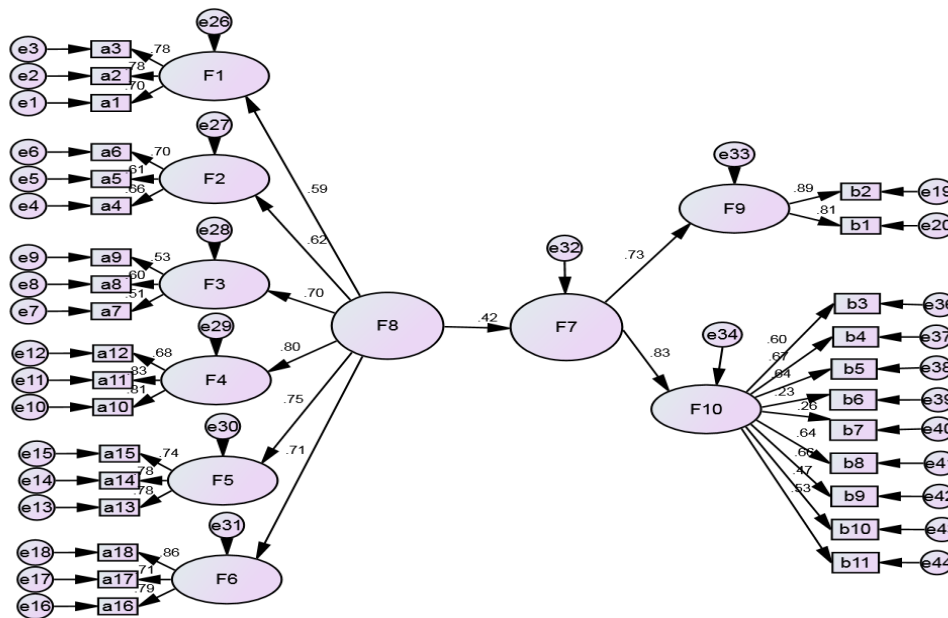

Figure 1 Routine model of research in standard mode

Table 3 Route Coefficients and Significant Values of Research Path Model

			Route coefficients in standard mode	Path coefficients in t-statistic mode	P-value	C.R
Fan Motivations	-->	Aggression	.424	.694	0.001	3.565
	-->	socialize	.593	.774	0.001	5.351
	-->	Function	.618	.715	0.001	5.190
	-->	Thrill	.702	.576	0.001	4.527
	-->	Reputation	.801	1.198	0.001	6.764
	-->	Variety	.746	1.125	0.001	6.411
	-->	Team knowledge	.712	1.000	-----	------
Aggression	-->	Verbal	.731	1.302	0.001	3.513
Aggression	-->	Physical	.833	1.000	-----	-----

Table 4 Fitting horns of research path model

P-value	CFI	RMSEA	GFI	Cmin/df	df	cmin
0.00	0.82	0.074	0.797	2.091	363	759.021

Discussion

The results show the high level of fan motivation of the Iranian Premier League teams as well as the level of aggression among the fans. These findings suggest that fans of the Iranian Premier League have a high level of motivation to support their teams. However, dissatisfaction and unfavorable circumstanc-es such as contextual factors of the event (such as media climate, social and cultural context, intra- and inter-team conflicts), managerial and performance factors (Bakhshi Zadeh et al. ,2019) as the most influential factors in the aggression of fans are likely to cause anger and may lead to very aggressive behaviours. There was also a posi-

tive and significant relationship between fan motivation and aggression (P <0.05). Also, the structural equation modelling of the research confirmed the desired relationships. Toder-Alon et al's (2018) results confirm the relationship between age, team identity, and fans' aggression. They believe older people have higher levels of loyalty and lower levels of aggression. Accordingly, the presence of older people in stadiums can create a calmer atmosphere. Although in the current study, the number of fans over the age of 31 is only 20%, this indicates that older people are reluctant to attend the Premier League. This unwillingness may be due to high-risk behaviours and feelings of insecurity.

The results suggest that supporters who claim to be more motivated than others to support their team will exhibit more aggressive behaviour than others. Conceptually, consumer motivation is divided into two types of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The concept of motivation has two directions: independence orientation and control orientation that express one's desire as a result of the experience of consumption to obtain benefits such as socialization, efficiency, emotion, self-esteem, fun (Mahony,2002). People also use sports activities as a means of social interaction with other viewers, participants, friends, and family as well as an escape from routine work and daily life (Madrigal, 1995; Wann, 1995). As a result, lack of interest may lead to aggressive behaviours and a greater desire to achieve the desired results and if the desired outcome is not achieved, aggressive behaviour may be verbally or even physically higher. Despite the specific conditions of our country's stadiums and the absence of some social restrictions, such as family presence and the creation of a cultural envi-

ronment in the stadiums, some barriers to aggressive behaviour have been eliminated, which in turn puts the individuals in an environment of aggressive behaviour.

Conclusion

In fact, aggression is one of the natural states of human beings. External manifestations of anger before aggressive behaviour can be found in facial and body states, cognitive reactions, and sometimes aggressive behaviours in general population. Aggression in football has existed almost since the beginning of the sport. Verbal violence is one of the most common types of violence. Many still believe that this type of violence does little to harm people. Social psychologists believe that aggression cannot be completely eliminated from the lexical culture of a language, but their use in communications and communication practices can be somewhat reduced and it can largely be controlled. Social psychologists believe that men curse more than women. The spread of blasphemous culture is a sign of cultural decline in society, in addition to ignorance, illiteracy, and depravity. One solution to this problem is the preemptive response and punishment by the police, law enforcement, court, and disciplinary committee. Another solution is to increase the control and monitoring of the viewing platforms, including the use of surveillance cameras and seat numbering to easily identify those who throw explosives into the ground and fight with one another. A useful and effective solution is to bring cultural-sports clubs closer to their fans so that they can have a positive impact on their fans' behaviour by using cultural models and programs and using social psychologists.

Acknowledgement

well as all the friends who assisted the research team in gathering information.

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